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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the effectiveness and advantages of using an explicit phonics based reading program in kindergarten through second grade. The methods of decoding words that teachers introduce to the beginning readers must prove to be effective in introducing and building reading skills. Most recent studies have revisited and concurred with studies done in the 1930s and 1960s that the lack of phonics based reading instruction leaves students without important decoding skills necessary in recognizing letter/sound relationships in reading. The subjects in this study are 12 inner-city Catholic elementary school students. Four students at each grade level are evaluated and interviewed. Each student is at a different reading level identified as high, medium and low. Another component of the study is the teacher interview directed at each grade level teacher kindergarten through second grade. The teachers are interviewed as to their philosophy, style and methodology of teaching reading using explicit phonics instruction. The research method used is qualitative. Data gathering, evaluation and results are coded to ensure interviewed and research subjects confidentiality and anonymity. The implications of this study are to add to the existing research that the learning of the phonological structure of a word through use of phonetic decoding skills determines the success of the emergent reader kindergarten through second grade. An appendix contains unnumbered charts and tables of data, teacher interview questions and responses, a reading diagnosis chart, and several word lists. Contains 26 references. (RS)

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Running Head: EFFECTIVENESS OF A SKILL BASED EXPLICIT PHONICS

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The Effectiveness of a Skill Based Explicit Phonics
Reading Program K-2 as Measured by Student
Performance and Teacher Evaluation

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Master of Science in Education

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Effectiveness of a Skill Based Explicit Phonics

The Effectiveness of a Skilled Based Explicit Phonics

Reading Program K-2 as Measured by Student

Performance and Teacher Evaluation

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Abstract

This study focuses on the effectiveness and advantages of using an explicit phonics based reading program in kindergarten through second grade. As teachers, the methods of decoding words that we introduce to the beginning readers must prove to be effective in introducing and building reading skills. Most recent studies have revisited and concurred with studies done in the 1930s and 1960s that the lack of phonics based reading instruction leaves students without important decoding skills necessary in recognizing letter/sound relationships in reading. The subjects in this study are twelve inner-city Catholic elementary school students. Four students at each grade level are evaluated and interviewed. Each student is at a different reading level identified as high, medium and low. Another component of the study is the teacher interview directed at each grade level teacher kindergarten through second grade. The teachers are interviewed as to their philosophy, style and methodology of teaching reading using explicit phonics instruction.

The research method used is qualitative. It is practice based research done within the classroom environment. Each of the four students at each grade level are evaluated as to their reading level, word attack skills and use of phonetic decoding skill during the second semester of the 1998-1999 school year. The three teachers are interviewed with a set of eight questions on philosophy of teaching reading, style and methods of phonics instruction. Data gathering, evaluation and results are coded to insure interviewed and research subjects confidentiality and anonymity. The implications of this study are to add to the existing research that the learning of the phonological structure of a word through use of phonetic decoding skills determines the success of the emergent reader kindergarten through second grade.

Introduction

One's earliest experiences in learning to read may be interactive, but what methods he or she uses to be a successful reader is the topic for discussion in this paper.

In a documented report to the Superintendent of Public Schools in California, The Reading Task Force proposed that the State Board "adopt materials in grade 1-8 that include systematic, explicit phonics, spelling, and computational skills." (Reading Program Advisory 1996) This proposal had been presented in an effort to turn around the overall low reading performance of California students in each grade level. The Task Force concluded that the previous 1987 State Language Arts Framework was not adequate nor balanced enough in basic skills instruction to offer the beginning reader the skills necessary to succeed academically in the higher grades. The lack of explicit phonetic instruction left students without the important decoding skills necessary in recognizing letter/ sound relationships and word building patterns. The new guidelines proposed, called for the teaching of "an organized, explicit skills program with phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding skills emphasized." Without phonetic decoding skills, children will not be able to "understand, apply and learn the alphabetic principle and conventions of the written language." (Reading Program Advisory 1996)

The reading process is a system used by successful readers to understand what they are reading. Three cueing systems are used interactively: the semantic cue uses background or prior knowledge of the reader, syntactic

cues the reader's knowledge of language patterns, and the use of graphophonic cues taps into the understanding of the letter/sound relationship and letter/word patterns. Effective readers use these three cues together to decode their text. However, if one of these cues is not developed, such as the graphophonic cue which integrates phonemic awareness with phonetic decoding skills, the beginning reader will be hindered in his or her ability to understand the text. This study will explore the effectiveness and outcome of explicit phonics instruction in a reading program kindergarten through second grade. It provides evidence that the implementation of an explicit phonics program within the reading curriculum leads to better reading skills through evaluation of phonetic decoding methods used in written and oral comprehension of letter sounds in words of the beginning reader.

Statement of the Problem

Given the implementation of an explicit instruction program, students in K-2 will show evidence of reading skills in their word recognition assessments and comprehension evaluations. Teachers will also describe their reading philosophies and student progress in their interviews. Implementation of an explicit skill based phonics program leads to increased reading skills and facilitates independent reading.

Learning to recognize phonemes or individual sounds leads to phonemic awareness in beginning readers. Phonemic awareness in pre-k or kindergarten is an essential first step in beginning to learn to read words. Phonemic awareness is the ability to discern the alphabetic language's "sound system." (Chall 1996) This ability to discern separate letter sounds in the alphabet heightens a child's awareness of the difference within that sound system. From this stage, using the "sound system" information, a child will be better able to separate sounds within words and use the phonetic system of decoding or separating these sounds within the word--to sound the word out. These phonemes or individual letter sounds make up the word. There are two approaches to teaching phonics as part of a skill based reading program, synthetic or explicit and analytic or implicit. Recent research data cited by Jeane Chall in a follow up to her earlier work done in 1967 Learning To Read: The Great Debate, suggests that use of explicit phonics instruction in reading programs is more effective in producing successful readers. Explicit phonics instruction emphasizes each letter sound of both consonants and vowels within

a word. Whereas in analytic instructional approach the "consonants are generally not isolated, but taught within the context of the whole word." (Chall 1996) The explicit system of instruction, because it emphasizes the sound letter relationship transfers more easily from learning to recognize phonemes within each word to recognizing that these letter sounds make up words. (Stanovich 1986) The more a child learns to use the explicit phonetic decoding skills in learning new words, the more he/she will be poised to become a more fluent, confident reader, capable of reading independently.

Rationale

The goal of reading teachers is to teach literacy; reading and writing to all children regardless of learning style. As "teachers of literacy" reading teachers teach children that language and literacy are necessary life skill tools that need to be taught and learned. (Pinnell 1998) These tools help children and adults enjoy and enrich their lives. Reading and writing skills are essential in communication and affect the outcome of a person's life socially and economically. Literacy encourages an economically successful and independent lifestyle. "A literate society is a thinking society." (Pinnell 1998)

Historically, literacy can be viewed within the context of social and economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. During the agricultural age, literacy was at a functional level, the level of proficiency needed to read for religious purposes, prayers and psalms by the general population. (Chall 1967) However, with the onset of the Industrial Revolution the levels of

reading and writing rose to meet the needs of learning unfamiliar text and eventually, with the increase in technology--increased the need to learn to read using analytic skills when reading unfamiliar text. (Chall 1996) During the Industrial Revolution, the ability to read, acquire new knowledge and skill, as well as to enhance and expand ones own socio-economic sophistication were valuable traits that gave power to the person who had mastered them. It was this level of literacy that gave value and power to the person who was able to use it socially and professionally and read independently.

By the 1920's, silent reading which allowed for the development of independent thought nurtured man's need for privacy, not only philosophically but mentally. Independent and silent reading continued in the 1920s when the eighth grade was the average grade attained by an adult in the general population. However, with the increased attendance of high school and increase in college graduates, the concern and need for "more proficient" reading and instructional style was manifesting itself in several theories on how to teach reading to all children in school.

In the 1930s research led to the thought that "children would fail to learn to read unless beginning instruction were delayed until the second semester of first grade." (Shanahan 1999) This philosophy reflected early researcher William Gray's theory that "children pass through different stages of development in acquiring mature habits." (Chall 1996) Gray, in a 1925 publication of National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook proposed one of the first "reading stage" theories with five levels or stages; preschool, K or early first grade, first

stages of reading instruction grade one, "rapid progress in fundamental attitudes, habits and skill, grade 2-3; reading to extend learning grades 4-6, and the period of refinement of specific reading attitudes." (Chall 1996) These five developmental stages were reviewed and re-issued in 1937. In years to come many more theorists, psychologists and educators such as Piaget, Kohlberg and Chall to name a few, made the connection between psycho-social development and reading. In response to and to bridge the gap between these developmental stages, reading readiness programs were introduced into school programs to provide a bridge between very early readers and available reading programs in schools. Dolores Durkin's study of Children Who Read Early (1966) initiated a turn around in the philosophy of reading instruction and its methodology. (Shanahan 1999) Her studies of "precocious early readers" provided information that showed children who revealed early interest in reading and who were read to by parents on a regular daily basis were children that learned to read successfully despite their age or developmental stage. Durkin set the stage for what has become the "emergent literacy" view and paved the way for researchers such as Jeanne Chall (1967) and her study Learning to Read: The Great Debate as well as Chall's 1983 work Stages in Reading Development that included the "emergent literacy" stages of development.

Background and Need

Perhaps the most influential impetus to change the direction of reading instruction in the United States was the First Grade Studies Research Project by

Guy Bond and Robert Dykstra (1967). In the 1960's this study reflected the results of combined research projects by Chall, Heilman, Cleland etc., on the reading process and the best methods of instruction. The study was significant because it proposed that no single method of teaching literacy was more effective. In fact, the study advocated for a cooperative, eclectic approach or "methodological eclecticism" in elementary reading i.e. the use of basals, phonics and literature. (Shanahan 1999) The First Grade Studies project was to become the springboard to the reading programs used in classrooms throughout the United States. Educator's attention "shifted from consideration of poorly described methods of (teaching reading) to a concern for the effects of more specific classroom activities". (Shanahan 1999)

Children's success in the early reading process is due to the introduction and implementation of phonemic awareness programs. (Stanovich 1986) A child's knowledge of sound and letter names is the variable that best predicts reading achievement in beginning readers. (Chall 1967) As with Chall, Stanovich proposes that if children lack the early knowledge of breaking language into individual sounds or phonemes, they will not be able to transfer this prior knowledge into the use of phonetic decoding skills. In turn, these phonetic decoding skills rely on the skills the phonemically aware child has learned in order to recognize the sound/letter relationship and to break down a word into different sounds as part of that process. "Phoneme manipulation is the most important part of a word decoding skill - to add delete or move phonemes to create a new word or nonword." (Adams 1990) Learning disabled children who

show deficits in "phonemic segmentation ability" miss that step necessary to transfer to phonetic decoding. Children who lack this ability have a reduced reading ability and progress K-1. (Lyon 1996) In Reid Lyon's study of disabled readers, children who are not able to learn the alphabet system or sound/letter relationship within that system have the greatest reading deficits and "need highly structured programs that focus explicitly on phonological rules". (Lyon 1996)

Research done by Jeanne Chall (1967, 1983), Marilyn Adams (1990) and Keith Stanovich (1986) introduces evidence that children who fail to learn and use a decoding system early on in a reading program have difficulty becoming proficient readers. The lack of that early decoding skill lessens their overall comprehension and academic skill when they reach intermediate or upper grade levels. The framework of this study revolves around the theories and research conclusions of Chall, Adams, Stanovich, Lyon and Moats. Their rationale that phonemic awareness is essential in developing phonetic decoding skills and that these phonological skills need to be taught explicitly is the basis of this paper.

Phonics, the decoding system that shows the relationship between letters and their corresponding sounds within words owes its effectiveness and outcome in teaching reading to researcher Jeanne Chall. (Adams 1990) Over the past thirty years, Chall has researched the different stages of reading development as well as researching the use of an explicit phonics skill based reading program in the classroom and its' success in effectively developing independent readers. The great debate of whether or not to teach and how to

teach phonics in the early grades, as well as why phonics instruction is beneficial began in the late 1950's. (Adams 1990) Corresponding to the alphabetic system, phonics was the method Chall identified that when used by beginning readers was the variable that provided a decoding skill that determined the effectiveness of good reading instruction. Higher achievement rates were the results in Chall's study of the early grades for "slower and/or economically disadvantaged students. (Adams 1990) Prior to 1967 basal readers were used by 98% of first grade teachers as part of their reading programs. The reading programs to that point were "whole word, meaning first, phonics little and later." (Adams 1990) Jeanne Chall was a member of a group of researchers who at the request of the National Conference of Research in English began a study on how to best teach beginning reading. This study was to evaluate and compare the different reading programs and their effectiveness. It became the most in-depth study of its time in reading research. The study became known as The U.S. Cooperative First Grade Study and compiled data from twenty seven different studies on the effects of different instructional approaches to teaching reading. Chall, as a member of this research team, began to explore two concerns in reading instruction; what were the different methods of teaching reading -- assumptions, objectives, outcomes and effectiveness? What were the variables that affected reading ability -- skill, age, and experience? Chall observed three hundred classrooms in both upper, middle and lower socio-economic school districts. Her methods were participant observation and teacher interview to determine teaching philosophy and

methodology in reading instruction. The outcome of her 1967 research revealed an important component that determined the effectiveness of any reading program, "the momentum, support, and expectations" projected by the teacher in presenting new programs." (Chall 1967) The effectiveness of the outcome of teacher momentum was due to the belief that the "new program strongly emphasized some set of skills or processes that its predecessor neglected or denied." (Chall 1967) In addition, she found that during the transition between two different processes, the old reading program was retained and the students "had the best of both approaches from their teachers." (Chall 1967)

It might be pertinent at this time in our shift from a literature based reading program in some schools to a skill based-explicit phonics program to note that the transitional period will produce much the same outcome as in Chall's study; the use of two systems until one takes over. Finally, through her observations Chall did see a pattern. Children taught in the traditional look-say methods of the basal reader program showed early success rates in "interest, comprehension, fluency and expression." (Adams 1990) However, the children who used phonics decoding skills showed "an early advantage in word recognition, word attack skill, (especially for unknown words) and because of these skills were able to participate in silent reading, comprehension, and learning of new vocabulary at a higher rate. Their fluency was evident by the end of the second grade." (Adams 1990) Jeanne Chall went on to complete other research studies, and publications of reading instruction and theory, most notable being her Stages of Reading Development (1983, 1996) This study built

upon her earlier research (1967) and proposed that "literate intelligence" was influenced by general cognitive development. (Chall, 1983)

Marilyn Adams recognized, as did Chall, the importance of hierarchical development of reading skills--that skills are built upon and dependent on each other. They result in a set of subskills used to decode words and assist in subsequent reading comprehension skills. To understand sentences "readers must be able to correctly analyze clauses and phrases of those sentences." (Adams 1990) Sentences were made up of words and the phonological translation of a word relied on the decoding process of the individual letters. Adams' research supported Chall and Stanovich's earlier studies and provided informational support towards the goal of learning to read, independent reading and reading for comprehension.

Literature Review

In the review of the literature addressing methods of reading instruction, more specifically explicit instruction in phonics and phonological skills, there are several common themes. How are the children taught to read effectively? What methods in beginning reading instruction can best effect all children not just children at risk for reading failure? There seems to be universal agreement between researchers such as Chall, Stanovich, Adams, Moats and most recently, Dr. Reid Lyon, Chief of Child Development and Behavior at the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD). In a report to the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, in April 1998, Dr. Lyon

opens his address stating that for 60% of America's children "learning to read is a formidable challenge." How we address this problem methodologically and instructionally is critical to producing good readers -- lifelong readers as well as identifying in early stages, children who are at risk for reading failure or deficiencies. In order to learn to read, the beginning reader needs to learn the connection between sounds (phonemes) and letters of the alphabet using the phonic decoding skills taught "systematically" and "directly" by their teacher. (Lyon 1998) Learning to read is not only a foundation for academic success, but an important occupational and life skill. Learning to read for life is the key to success in school and on the job.

Much of the literature of the past addresses whole language (literature based instruction) versus direct explicit phonics instruction in reading. This review focuses not only on the issue of methodology, but on other different factors that contribute to the development of successful theories and practices of reading and reading fluency. These factors are historical perspectives in literacy development, the development process or how children learn to read, social/biological perspectives in literacy development, and finally what methodological approaches best effect the beginning reader in becoming a successful fluent reader -- a reader who can comprehend the text.

Historical Perspective

Literacy and the reading process changed from a functional state or level of proficiency in the agricultural age to the analytic stage in the post Industrial

Revolution and technological age where the need to read unfamiliar text required analytic skill. Over the past sixty to seventy years there has been research into how much about the reading process; biological, neurological - environmental sociologically and methodologically do we know and how we are using that knowledge to teach reading to children.

The nationwide concern for instructional methods in reading and how they impact children's ability to learn to read has been ongoing over the past century; from William Gray's research of developmental stages of reading to the NICHD research conducted over the past thirty three years. Over the past thirty three years, the NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) has been supporting research projects that study what good reading skills instruction looks like and what are the causes of reading failure. The research has included data compiled by Jeanne Chall who in 1967 produced a study on the definition of the reading process, effective reading skills and reading development in relation to different reading programs. Chall was convinced that the use of systematic explicit phonics instruction predicated by phonological awareness skills was an essential component to early reading programs. A determinant of reading program success as aforementioned in this paper, was the classroom atmosphere conveyed by the teacher when presenting reading instruction. Teacher "support, expectation and momentum" projected in the reading program affected the outcome of effectiveness of reading instruction on the children as to whether they became successful early readers. When transitioning from one type of reading program to another, the child received the

best of both reading programs and instructional methods since the old method was retained until the teacher achieved a comfort level in teaching and adapting the instructional material. At this point, Louisa Moats in her recent 1997 address to the U.S. House of Representatives noted-"the transition from one program to another reading program may also lead to confusion and misrepresentation to the student because many of our teachers have been ill prepared to teach reading because of their own lack of preservice and inservice training."

Presently, Moats herself is a research member for the NICHD and has completed a five year study of early reading instruction. Her discussion, the "superficiality of teacher training drives teachers toward a method or program orientation" is a valid one particularly in reference to today's reading education dilemma of which reading method best suits the beginning reader, whole language or phonics based instruction. The recent 1998 ruling from the California State Board of Education mandates a "systematic explicit phonics skill based reading instruction program." (Reading Program Advisory 1996) While the debate of one methods effectiveness over another continues, teachers in California public schools continue to use both a literature based reading method approach and include systematic skill based phonics instruction. However, the effectiveness of using one instructional system over another is at issue. In fact, California's children may be at risk in attaining reading proficiency because of the unwillingness, inability or both of teachers who do not embrace in total an early reading skill based explicit phonics method of instruction. Louisa C. Moats is the Director of Teacher Training at the Greenwood School in Vermont and is

also a project director for NICHD. In her speech to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, she voices concern over the lack of "preparation of teachers of reading." (Moats 1997) She urges educators to "establish a profession that is informed by science to meet every child's need for reading success." (Moats 1997) Moats year long tenure in California as an advisor to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing in 1996, raises the issue of introducing reading instruction programs to teachers who do not learn the fundamentals of grammar and reading themselves. She cites examples of how some teachers are still teaching literature based programs "strong on literature-pictures and motivation strategies, but weak and misinformed on the structure of language or how children actually learn to read words on a page." (Moats 1997) Looking at pictures, guessing at words on a page, without knowing how to decode a word has been an ongoing methodology. Moats contends that a balanced reading program contains "identification and production of speech sound, teaching of phoneme awareness, and how children learn to read and spell." Children need to be shown how to phonetically sound out and blend letters. They need to be directed and taught "explicitly." (Moats 1997)

Dr. Reid Lyon, in his address to the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources discusses the outcome of over thirty years of research into the reading process at NICHD. Research shows that the variable to success in reading is the development of phoneme awareness or sound/letter relationship. The awareness of sound in our language is essential and the ability to see sound structure as a part of language is the first essential step in learning to

read. (Lyon 1998) Keith Stanovich talks about the "Matthew Effect" in his 1986 paper which is the "idea that early advantages for learners lead to even greater later advantages." The advantage is the development of phoneme awareness or recognition of sound/letter relationships as segmented units of speech. Without this phoneme awareness in early reading stages, children encounter difficulty using phonics to decode words. This difficulty in language awareness and development of phonic decoding skills hinders a child's early reading development. (Stanovich 1986)

Developmental Process (How do children learn to read?)

In his address to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Dr. Reid Lyon stresses that the alphabetic system in the English language is a challenge to the beginning reader because individual letters correspond to sounds (phonemes) -- these sounds blended together form a word. The beginning reader must learn to connect forty or so sounds of spoken English phonemes and the twenty six letters of the alphabet. The way a child learns phoneme awareness is through explicit instruction. Likewise in order to sound out a word a child needs to be explicitly taught how to use phonics as a decoding skill in reading. (Lyon 1998) What NICHD research shows as well as the research done by Chall in her 1983 study Stages of Reading Development is that learning to read involves stages of cognitive development from beginning to advanced readers. Chall proposes six stages of reading development that build upon the knowledge acquired by the previous stage. The reading process changes with the skills acquired--the stage development theory. Lyon (1998) Chall (1996, 1983, 1967), Adams (1990) and Stanovich (1986) are all in

agreement that the critical stage of development is stage one, the initial reading and decoding stage, ages six and seven. It is stage one, learning how to read and decode words using explicit phonics instruction that this paper addresses and evaluates. In stage one there are two principles; recognition that speech is segmented into sounds (phoneme awareness) and that these "segmented units of speech" can be represented by printed forms, relating letter/sounds to the printed word or phonics. "To understand written spellings represent phonemes of spoken words (alphabetic principle) is absolutely necessary for the development of accurate and rapid word reading skill." (Lyon 1998)

Environmental, Social and Biological

Since the NICHD initiated studies in 1965 into the process of reading and what happens when a child cannot recognize letter/sound relationships, they have found "it is not the ear that understands that c-a-t is divided into three sounds and can be linked to the word cat, but it is the brain that performs this function." (Lyon 1998) There are neural systems that perceive phonemes in some children in language less efficiently than other children." Thus, such a skill; to recognize and link the relationship between letters/sounds needs to be taught "directly, explicitly and by a well trained and well informed teacher." (Lyon 1998)

Marilyn Adams (1990), a fellow researcher and colleague of Lyon, in her book Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print, discusses the hierarchical organization of reading development in children and different sequential stages children go through when learning to read. When a child has difficulty in the early stage from developing phoneme awareness to breaking up

a word into different sounds (phonics), explicit systematic phonics instruction of how to break up letter sounds within a word and to create new words leads to better readers. If a new reader does not recognize the printed word quickly - meaning is lost - therefore learning phoneme awareness and phonetic principles and practicing those decoding skills continually as well as applying those skills within literature texts will lead to "(reading) fluency and automatically in decoding and word recognition skills." (Adams 1990) In turn, this systematic practice leads to more fluid reading skills that aid in overall comprehension of the text, and helps construct meaning from print.

What affects the reading fluency of some children? Environmental and social issues do affect the beginning reader. NICHD research, Stanovich and other researchers indicate that during the pre-school years early reading related skills "phoneme awareness and phonics can be learned at home." When children are introduced to print and various literacy activities (letter and number names, rhyming activities), these are critical in early language development. The lack of this early literacy based interaction at home may be another variable in determining good vs. poor readers. Parental involvement in exposing preschoolers to literacy activities, parents reading to their children and encouraging "opportunities to learn, think, and talk about their reading experiences -- these children will gain much from the reading process." (Lyon 1998) In fact these findings support the theories and findings of Piaget, Kohlberg and Vygotsky all of whom discuss early stages of cognitive development and the beneficial effects of early parent interaction verbally and socially with their

children. Early literacy and reading activities are interactive and reflect to the child the importance of reading and writing through the reading process behavior modeled by the parent.

In an article "Reading for Life" Better Homes and Gardens (Feb. 1999), author Anne O'Connor reviews for parents what environmental and social factors as well as academic or genetic factors lead to early reading success. Her advice to parents is that "children need to talk about words, writing, and reading -- they need to practice reading." (Anne O'Connor 1999) As Louise Moats points out in her articles, "we need to give them (children) a lot of practice reading things they can read. We are realizing how much practice it takes." (Moats 1997) Give children the opportunity to hear words, create an atmosphere that gives the child the opportunity to "explore" words and reading. Make reading an activity to enjoy together. A home environment that supports literacy is an environment where books, magazines and newspapers are displayed and readily available.

Beyond the socio-environmental aspects of providing children with literacy support, we are finding that "children from homes where parental reading level is low -- are predisposed to reading failure." (Lyon 1998) These low levels may reflect parent's own difficulty in learning to read - creating a kind of cyclical atmosphere of reading failure. Genetics sometimes may contribute to a history of family reading dysfunction. New research by Dr. Lyon and NICHD on early brain development may help to show us "how to understand how the brain changes as reading develops and how specific teaching methods change reading behavior." (Lyon 1998)

Methodological and Direct Instruction

Which method of instruction best suits the beginning reader in becoming not only a successful reader of print, but one who can comprehend and analyze the text? Early reading intervention studies done at NICHD show that explicitly taught phonics instruction and phonemic awareness skills are important components to early reading success. (Evers 1999) In fact, researcher and reading specialist Benita Blachman states in an article by Williamson M. Evers "What's Gone Wrong in America's Classroom" (1998) that

"direct, systematic instruction about the alphabetic code is not routinely provided in K and first grade, despite the fact that, given what we know at the moment, this might be the most powerful weapon in the fight against illiteracy." (Blachman 1996)

The NICHD research findings advocate a direct teaching method of phonics and phonological awareness. Furthermore, studies show that if phoneme awareness and phonics decoding skills are not developed by the first grade and these skills are not used in decoding unfamiliar words, reading proficiency is at a deficit. "It continues to effect reading levels and proficiency up to the end of fourth grade." (Juel 1988)

There are "multiple processes" related to learning to read successfully. In relation to this, studies on the evaluation of the "degree of explicitness required to teach word recognition skills" find that the more exposure the beginning reader has to literature to apply and practice reading and writing skills, the more proficient he/she will become in practice and application. (Evers 1999)

Throughout the review of literature, one theme holds true--children need to pass

through the first stage of learning to read; learn phoneme awareness as it relates to the alphabetic principles of English language. They need to be explicitly taught how to connect this phoneme awareness and phonics decoding skills in order to recognize and learn new words or word patterns. However, what is evident throughout all the literature reviewed for this paper, is the importance of being exposed to different kinds of print and specifically good literature--not to "isolate code based instruction from whole language (literature based) instruction." (Lyon 1998) (Moats 1997) In fact, Lyon states that research knowledge must "inform us and help us combine methods and approaches within reading instruction to best meet the learning needs, styles and stages of the children and their environments." (Lyon 1998)

Methodology

This research project was conducted in conjunction with and followed the methodological guideline provided by the Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Human Research with Human Participants in the American Psychological Association (1982) A PA Publication Manual, Fourth Edition, 1994.

The research site used in this study was an inner city Catholic parochial elementary school with a student population of 269 K-8; made up of approximately 59% African American, 16% Filipino, 7% Hispanic, 5% Asian American, 4% white and 9% mixed race students. Forty five percent of the students are from single parent homes. Children come from all over the city of San Francisco; 20% from East Bay and 13% from So. San Francisco or

Peninsula. Forty-two percent are Catholic, 57% are non-Catholic, 40% are on free or reduced lunch. The ethnic make-up of the teaching staff was predominately white female, with one African American teacher and two white male teaching staff members. The researcher obtained written permission from the school principle as well as from all teachers participating in an interview. All information supplied by interviewed subjects as well as research subjects was coded to insure confidentiality and anonymity. The research method was qualitative, practice based research done in the classroom and school.

The intent of this study was to add to research information on the effectiveness of an explicit phonics reading program within a literature based curriculum and was exploratory in nature and purpose. Teacher philosophy and commitment to an explicit phonics program was explored as to how it effected the reading program kindergarten through second grade. To provide a consistent base of information for studying the effect of an explicit phonics reading program on children, teachers in K-2 were interviewed as to their philosophy, style and methods of teaching phonics. There was only one teacher per grade level. The researcher was the first grade teacher and provided the same information as given by the other teachers in the interview. Twelve students, four students (per grade), grades kindergarten through second grade were identified as high level, medium level, and low level readers by their teachers. Their identities were coded by grade level and reading level, for example (K-1-H, K-2-M, K-3-M, K-4-H). Each was assessed and evaluated as to their reading style, phonemic awareness, development of phonetic decoding

skills and comprehension of text. The levels assessed were as follows:

Kindergarten Level (K-1-T = Kindergarten teacher; white male, 32 yrs., teaching kindergarten two years, sixth grade one year. Level of education: MBA plus California Credential for multiple subject.

Code assigned numbers to students and their reading level were as follows:

K-1-L (low) - African American male, 5 yrs., good health

K-2-M (med) - African American female, 6 yrs. good health

K-3-M (med) - African American female, 6 yrs. good health

K-4-H (high) - Hispanic male, 6 yrs. good health

First Grade level - F-1-T First grade teacher, researcher, white female, 47 years old teaching first grade one year, taught reading to middle school students one year in Title One Reading Program, California Credential for multiple subject; Masters of Science in Education (in progress).

Code assigned numbers to students and their reading level were as follows:

1-1-L (low) - African American female, 6 yrs., good health

1-2-M (med) - Filipino American male, 6 yrs., good health

1-3-M (med) - African American female, 7 yrs., good health

1-4-H (high) - Hispanic male, 7 years, good health

Second grade level (S-2-T) Second grade teacher, Hispanic female, unstated age has taught primary grades 1-3 for thirty plus years. California Credential - multiple subject, 60 plus credits in further education.

Code assigned numbers to students and their reading level were as follows:

2-1-L (low) - Filipino African/American male, 8 yrs., good health

2-2-M (med) - African/American male 8 yrs., good health

2-3-M (med) - African/American female, 8 yrs., good health

2-4-H (high) - Filipino female, 8 yrs., good health

Materials

At each level for teacher interviews, the researcher used a guide of eight questions. (See Appendix) Materials used as a base in the reading program kindergarten through second grade were; The Signature Reading Series, a "fully integrated reading and language arts program." (Signature Series 1997) The series encouraged thematic and integrated learning in different subject areas related to the reading program material. Within each Signatures level there were instructional skills and strategies designed for the teachers that included a phonics component (analytic-used within the context of the literature), writing skills exercises, as well as social studies, science and art activities related to the theme or subject introduced in the literature. Each grade level's reading program consisted of the following materials:

- Kindergarten: Signature Series, Harcourt Brace Publishers New York (1997)
Phonics workbook, Modern Curriculum Press (1995)
Phonics Activity workbook - Signatures - Harcourt Brace (1997) New York
Ekwalls Most Frequently Used Word List plus the Dolch most frequently used word list
- First Grade: Signature Series, Harcourt Brace Publishers New York (1997)
Signature Series Workbook - exercises for each story include reinforcing of word attack skills, grammar, phonics and story comprehension (1997)
McCracken Spelling Through Phonics: Identifying beginning, ending and medial letter sounds.
Houghton Mifflin English Workbook Plus: supplementary grammar (1990)
Phonics: Modern Curriculum Press -- phonics workbook (1995)
Ekwall's Most Frequently used word list plus the Dolch most frequently used word list
- Second Grade: Signature Series: Harcourt Brace Publishers New York (1997)
Signature Series Workbook (1997) - exercises for each story include reinforcing of word attack skills, grammar, phonics and story comprehension
Phonics: Modern Curriculum Press - phonics workbook (1995)
Ekwalls Most frequently used word list (1993)
Supplementary Readers: Give Me A Clue (Ginn & Co., Lexington, Mass) Glad to Meet You (Ginn & Co., Lexington, Mass)

Materials used to assess and evaluate each child were as follows:

- Alphabet chart - to assess letter/sound identification
- Ekwall's Graded Word List (most frequently used word list)
- Ekwall's Reading Diagnosis Chart (modified to evaluate reading skill, use of phonics decoding skill, comprehension) (Ekwall 1993)
- Use of oral comprehension question: "Tell me what happened in the beginning, middle and end of the story" to assess comprehension

- Pre-primers, primer and basal readers at each reading level (low, medium and high) containing lists of phonograms ("which are a series of letters that begin with a vowel and are often found together, sometimes referred to as a word family". (Ekwall 1993)
 - Pre-Primers - Little Dog Laughed (Ginn & Company, Lexington Mass.)
Fish and Not Fish
 - Primers - Give Me A Clue (Ginn & Company, Lexington Mass.)
Glad To Meet You
Sound of Numbers (Holt, Reinhart & Winston New York)
 - Grade Level- First Grade - Signature Series (Harcourt Brace
Reader - Warm Friends and Company, New York)
- Each child took approximately twenty minutes to one half hour to assess as to the level of his/her phoneme awareness skill, use of phonics decoding skill and story comprehension in reading. Each teacher interview was conducted within approximately one half hour. (See Appendix)

Procedure

Teacher interviews were conducted first in this study to identify each teacher's philosophy and methodology of reading instruction. Jeanne Chall's study had revealed "teacher momentum and attitude projected while teaching a new program influenced the effectiveness of any reading program." It was important to take this factor of teacher attitude into consideration before evaluating the children. Each teacher interview, kindergarten through second grade was conducted in the respective teacher's classroom after school. The interview consisted of eight interview questions. (See Appendix for responses).

The questions were conducted as follows:

1. Please describe your philosophy on teaching reading.
2. Do you include other components in the reading program? (clues, literature, prediction -- the reading process?)
3. Is your reading program a phonics based program/ Which program is it? Describe the program -- its goals and methodology.
4. When teaching your phonics program, do you use it in conjunction with a text or in isolated presentation or both? Please describe.
5. How do you measure study knowledge or outcome/effectiveness of phonics/reading program? Please give examples of assessment methods used -- verbal as well as written.
6. How effective do you feel your phonics/reading program is in providing student outcome of grade level or above reading competence?
7. How do you compensate for different entry level reading skills?
8. What do you see as your responsibility to compensate for those differences?

Before going into the assessment procedure for each grade level and child, it was important and helpful to obtain an idea of the routine of each grade level reading program. Was there daily reading instruction? Were the classes taught whole group or divided into reading groups or both? What kinds of reading activities took place within each grade level; shared reading, guided reading and/or teacher directed read alouds?

The kindergarten classroom consisted of twenty-eight students. The teaching goal in reading was to learn that letters represent sounds and that letter/sounds made up words. Another goal was to help develop phoneme awareness through direct, explicit and repetitive daily instruction. Morning

opening exercises consisted of oral and written recognition of alphabet letter/sound and letter printing. Phonics workbook skills in recognizing beginning sounds of a word and ending sounds of a word were introduced in the thirty-sixth week of school. These daily teacher directed skill exercises were followed by a literature based reading/language arts program "Signature Series" (Harcourt Brace 1997). This reading program introduced stories around a central theme. The teacher read aloud the story to the whole class. He focused the children by reading one sentence at a time and had the class repeat each sentence after he read it. Following this, the class read with the teacher in individual books. During this time, prediction, (using picture clues from the text) was introduced to cue the children as to the relationship between the printed word and the picture in the text, to help with overall story comprehension. Each week a letter sound was introduced into the exercises following the literature segment. After the literature segment, AstroPhonics workbook skill sheets were used to teach and reinforce isolated and contextual letter/sound relationship. Homework sheets repeated classwork exercises. Total daily reading program time: one hour and forty-five minutes to two hours.

"The goal of the first grade is to learn, develop and use phoneme awareness and phonics decoding skills through direct, explicit instruction and repetition of phonics." (Lyon 1998) The first grade classroom consisted of twenty eight students. First graders began their day with a written exercise; either a wordsearch, "following directions" which consisted of writing directions and an illustrating for meaning exercise or Reading in a Flash (a set of eight words they

cut out and arranged into different sentences and wrote down on a separate piece of paper). They had one of these exercises at the beginning of the day each day of the week from 8:30 - 9:00 daily. Morning writing exercise was followed by "Signature Series" (Harcourt Brace 1997), a literature based thematic leveled reading series that consisted of five leveled readers with a supplemental skills workbook that contained grammar, comprehension and phonics exercises in conjunction with the text. The whole class was reading level three reader "Warm Friends". The teacher introduced the story through a teacher read aloud and introduced vocabulary words to students to write down in their "wordwall" books or journals. The following reading exercise was a "shared reading" with students following in their individual readers. Students then read aloud with the teacher and again by themselves. Students also used their readers in sustained silent reading exercises each time they finished any classwork early. Following daily exercises such as these, all students worked in their supplementary Signatures workbooks doing teacher directed exercises that reinforced vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure and phonics. Short and long vowel sounds were taught in isolation and within words from the text to the whole class. Phonograms or word family exercises were taught three times a week to the whole class. A supplemental text used to help in recognition of beginning, ending and medial letter sounds in words was McCracken Spelling Through Phonics. Late morning or early afternoon reading program exercises were conducted in the phonics workbook, level A Phonics (Modern Curriculum Press 1995) which combined analytic phonics instruction with teacher directed

explicit isolated phonics instruction. In addition, the phonics workbook also presented skills exercises that covered identifying beginning, ending and medial sounds within words as well as vowel and consonant blends. Total time spent on reading instruction daily, to include writing exercises was two and one half to three hours.

The teaching goal of the second grade was to continue to develop knowledge of the printed word and to use phonic decoding skills in learning new words, recognizing words and in word comprehension. The second grade classroom consisted of thirty students. The whole class daily reading program began with the teacher putting eight words on the blackboard each day to be copied into a "wordwall" book. Those eight vocabulary words related to the second grade "Signature Series" (Harcourt Brace 1997) literature based thematic reading text one of five leveled readers. Four additional spelling words were to be copied. With each of the words, the teacher pointed out the regular sounded words (to be sounded out phonetically) as well as new sight words that needed to be repeated and memorized. Each new word was said by the teacher, sounded out, "finger printed" on the desk and written in a notebook. The children were taught directly and in whole class instruction. New words were learned by "shading" out one letter at a time while sounding out the word. Words were copied six to ten times each in the notebook. Following this whole class exercise, there was a period of sustained silent reading; four pages of text from the Signature Series reader, supplementary reader or classroom library book. Late morning and early afternoon phonics exercises consisted of level B Phonics

Workbook (Modern Curriculum Press 1995), and the supplementary Signatures series literature workbook. Phonics was taught explicitly, directly through oral and/or written exercises emphasizing each letter sound, b-i-r-d to blend into one word. Repetitive instruction was used look, listen, say and write. To follow those phonics exercises of breaking words into sounds and syllables, children had an additional spelling book that included phonics exercises, breaking words into syllables, grammar etc...Second graders wrote stories following a "story plan" which emphasized beginning, middle and end sequence in story telling. Total time spent on daily reading program for second grade was three hours.

How Children Were Assessed

The children assessed at each grade level were chosen by their respective teachers as to their reading level; low, medium and high (or below grade level, at grade level, above grade level). Their names were given to the researcher who then arranged all the children kindergarten through second grade in a coded order by grade level. For example, k-1-1 (kindergarten-1st subject assessed-below reading level). Three factors were used as a base in assessing reading skills attained in reading instruction; level of phoneme awareness, effectiveness of phonics instruction as observed in word attack skills and word recognition/comprehension as it related to phonetic decoding skills. At each grade level, the assessment tools used were in order as follows: alphabet chart - to test letter/sound identification isolated and in correlation to beginning letter sound, Ekwall's Graded Word List to assess the grade level word attack

skill as well as the memory of most frequently used words. Ekwall's Reading Diagnosis Chart (modified) was used with an assigned reading text for evaluation of decoding skills -- both phonetic and comprehension. To assess story comprehension, a comprehension question "tell me what happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the story" was used and the student answered orally. The researcher recorded answers on the back of the reading diagnosis sheet.

Beginning with the second grade, each child was assessed outside their classroom. Second grade assessments were done as follows:

date	subject	ethnicity/ age	gender	alpha/ chart	reading grade lvl	EK diag.	Ques. Compr.	Books used
3/11/99	2-1-L	Filip/Af/Am 8	(M)	x	x p/1	x	x	Give Me A Clue p. 28-30
3/9/99	2-2-M	Af/Am 8	(M))	x	x 2.0	x	x	Give Me A Clue p. 28-30
3/9/99	2-3-M	Af/Am 8	(F)	x	x 2.0	x	x	Give Me A Clue p. 28-30
3/5/99	2-4-H	Filip 8	(F)	x	x 4.0	x	x	Give Me A Clue p. 28-30

First Grade assessments were conducted as follows:

3/12/99	1-1-L	Af/Am 7	(F)	x	x pr-P	x	x	Signatures "My Best Friend"
3/16/99	1-2-M	Filip. 7	(M))	x	x 1.9	x	x	Signatures "Hop Jump p.119-125
**3/16/99	1-3-M	Af/Am 7	(F)	x	x 1.0	x	x	Arthur's Reading Race
3/16/99	1-4-H	Hispanic 7	(M)	x	x 3.0	x	x	Signatures "Mouse in the House p. 147-159

**only one child assessed using a trade book plus reader.

Kindergarten assessments were conducted as follows:

3/11/99	K-1-L	Af/Am 5	(M)	x	below pr-p	x	x	Little Dog Laughed
3/16/99	K-2-M	Af/Am. 6	(F))	x	pre-p	x	x	Fish and Not Fish p.7-12
3/16/99	K-3-M	Af/Am 6	(F)	x	pre-p	x	x	Fish and Not Fish p.7-12
3/11/99	K-4-H	Hispanic 6	(M)	x	primer lvl	x	x	Sound of Numbers p.37-51

The "x" marks indicate the assessment was completed. At each grade level, with each child's assessment, the researcher began with the letter/sound recognition of the alphabet letters to determine the extent of phoneme awareness,

kindergarten through second grade. The following evaluation given was the Ekwall Graded Word List to determine the word recognition level of each child. This information was noted to compare with individual teacher evaluation of that child as to their perceived reading level when introduced to the researcher. The third level of evaluation used was the Reading Diagnosis Chart (Ekwall 1993). This chart was modified by the researcher and used to record the proficiency of oral reading skills used by the child while he/she was reading the assigned grade level text. In effect, the Reading Diagnosis chart was used to assess knowledge of the alphabet, word by word reading technique, self corrections, reading skill procedures i.e. "finger pointing, head movement," sight vocabulary proficiency, phonetic decoding skills and difficulties, and rate of reading as it effected story accuracy. Story recall and comprehension was checked orally by the researcher after the Reading Diagnosis Chart was completed. The researcher asked the question, "What happened in the beginning of the story?" and the child's oral response was noted on the backside of the reading diagnosis sheet. The same procedure was followed for the questions "what happened in the middle of the story and what happened at the end of the story?" By using the Reading Diagnosis Chart, the researcher could assess the child's reading proficiency at his/her reading level and determine if any reading difficulties existed due to low level phoneme awareness skills, and/or phonics decoding skills and how these difficulties affected comprehension while the child was reading aloud. The researcher observed and recorded the methods the child used to read and to comprehend words, as well as how they self corrected

while reading. Self correction frequently occurred at each level, low, medium or high. The child guessed at the word in context to the picture in the text and then realized that it did not make sense -- went back and sounded out the word letter by letter and then blended the sounds to make the word -- using the phonics decoding skills he/she had learned. Self-correcting was most evident in the second and first graders irrespective of reading level, but not as evident in kindergarten. Kindergarten level readers, at all levels seemed to use little self correction because they tended to have memorized the text and had not yet learned the skill of reading and understanding words in context. In relation to this observation, kindergartners, at all levels, had difficulty with story comprehension. They did not associate meaning to the printed word they read.

Results

The purpose of this study has been to explore the effectiveness of explicit phonics instruction as a determining factor in the reading proficiency of kindergarten through second grade students. Through teacher interviews on philosophy and methodology of reading instruction, as well as assessments of twelve kindergarten through second grade students, it appeared that the use of explicit phonics instruction led to reading proficiency. The study was two fold in procedure; examining teacher philosophy and methodology in reading instruction and assessing student's reading progress kindergarten through second grade as it related to explicit phonics instruction within a literature based reading program.

In teacher interviews, kindergarten through second grade, it was evident that all teachers agreed that explicit phonics instruction was the cornerstone of the reading program. Furthermore, the invaluable key component in this reading program was the continuity in reading instruction and supplementary reading materials used in kindergarten through second grade. Teachers interviewed showed similar philosophy and methodology in emphasizing explicit phonics instruction within their respective reading programs. Teacher consensus and attitude was a highly relative and pivotal component to the reading program success. Going back to Jeanne Chall's study, it was teacher momentum and attitude that affected reading instruction and outcome, as well as directly effecting a classroom's learning atmosphere and student attitude in receiving reading instruction. In this study, each teacher at his/her level used supplementary explicit phonics instruction in addition to analytic phonics instruction material provided in the text. They taught explicit phonics in a direct and systematic manner - in isolated examples, exercises and within the text.

The assessments of the twelve students, kindergarten through second grade, were based on three factors; level of phoneme awareness, effectiveness of phonics instruction observed in a child's use of decoding skills when reading, and word recognition and comprehension as it related to the use of phonetic decoding skills while orally reading the assigned text. The children who possessed phoneme awareness as well as a complete knowledge of alphabetic letter/sounds and corresponding words were the children that were more successful at using phonetic decoding or "sounding out" skills. They were more

proficient readers than the children who lacked phoneme awareness. Effective phonics instruction in all children was observed in relation to their word attack skills when reading assigned texts. The higher reading level of the child, the more self-correction took place in relation to the use of phonics when decoding unfamiliar words, as well as the use of context clues to attain word and sentence meaning. The use of direct, explicit phonics instruction within the textual presentation gave the children the decoding skills necessary to read familiar as well as unfamiliar text.

The children were assessed at each reading level; (below grade level, at grade level, and above grade level) as to similarities and differences in reading proficiency. The below level reader in all grades lacked a complete knowledge of alphabet letter sounds and corresponding words. In all grades, kindergarten through second grade, the low level readers did not possess adequate or basic level sight word knowledge as provided by the Ekwall and Dolch list of the most frequently used sight words. This lack of knowledge effected their rate of reading. In all grades, lower leveled readers read word by word. Together these factors led to a reduced level of word meaning or comprehension -- these readers did not read ahead, finish the sentence and check for meaning. It was difficult for them to understand the word in context of the sentence. However, grades one and two low-level readers did guess at words and self-correct when looking at picture clues. The kindergarten low level reader seemed to have memorized the text, but this did not help with story comprehension, although he did use picture clues to prompt himself. First and second graders at all levels

used their phonics to break up the unfamiliar words letter/sound by letter/sound, said the word, checked to see context clue or picture and then said the word correctly. K-1-L and 1-1-L used finger points to track their words, and although it slowed them down in reading speed they were accurate in sounding words out. 2-1-L did not use finger-tracking and lost his reading place. He was not able to read fluidly without mistakes.

At grade level, readers shared a good knowledge of alphabet letter/sounds. Each child was able to site examples of words with corresponding alphabet sounds. All "at-level" readers possessed an average to above average knowledge of basic sight words. In addition, at level readers used contextual clues to help them attain word meaning, checked to see if phonics decoding worked and if the subsequent word made sense in the sentence. Both first and second graders used self-correction in context of the sentence read. At grade level kindergarten had difficulty attaching meaning to the printed word. There was little self-correction at the kindergarten level, although kindergarten and at level first graders used finger tracking to track their words and keep their place. First and second graders, at level readers, used phonograms or word families within a word to help them figure out unfamiliar words. The use of context clues for all at level readers in all grades K-2 helped with word recognition in unfamiliar text.

All "above-grade level" readers K-2 had good knowledge of and used alphabet letter/sounds to create new words. Each above grade level reader knew basic sight words and were above reading level in vocabulary. These

readers used head movement and voice tracking, but no finger tracking. The high rate of speed in reading did not affect their reading accuracy and they were fluid readers. The above grade level readers used phonics skills to decode words - splitting them up - "sounding them out" - looking at the sentence and picture to check for context clues and then reading on without difficulty. The only glaring differences were kindergarten and first grade above level readers who had difficulty with long vowel sound words. Kindergarten, at every level, had difficulty with story comprehension; what happened in the beginning, middle and end of the story. It appeared that the above level kindergarten reader applied the phonetic skills to decode a word, but had a problem relating meaning to a word in or out of context. This problem with comprehension was probably due to auditory memorization of the text.

Analysis of Data/Discussion

At this school, consisting of two hundred and sixty-two students, and only one teacher per grade level, teacher momentum and attitude was particularly important. It provided a curriculum continuum in kindergarten through second grade. All teachers K-2 were in agreement and had consulted with each other on the importance of direct, systematic, explicit phonics instruction. Teachers used similar supplementary explicit phonics instruction material at each grade level in repetitive written and oral exercises.

Student assessments K-2, revealed several factors that contributed to successful and proficient readers. These factors were phoneme awareness,

learning and using phonics (as it builds on phoneme awareness), use of phonics decoding skills in creating more confident readers, creation of subskills to aid in word attack skills, self-correction and the knowledge of basic sight words. What was evident in grade level to above-grade level readers was the direct correlation between phoneme awareness and the level of phonics decoding skills. Proficient readers were able to build upon their "segmented units of speech sounds" or phoneme awareness and transition in recognizing this skill and applying it to printed or letter form (relating letter/sounds to the printed word) as a phonetic decoding skill. The below grade level readers, K-2 had not made that progression of building reading skills. Once they have attained a higher level of phoneme awareness, phonetic decoding will become easier and a buildable skill. The above-grade level readers had created a reading subskill of using phonograms or word families to help decode unfamiliar words in the text. They had in place the ability to build upon already present reading skills and phonetic decoding practices which aided them in reading unfamiliar text. In addition, at grade level and above-grade level readers used self-correction once they had employed their phonetic decoding skills. At and above grade level readers read on to the end of the sentence, self-corrected and checked for context within the sentence, checked picture clues and read on to complete the sentence. This self-correcting procedure helped to clarify their text comprehension. Basic sight word comprehension/knowledge was also a major factor in contributing to reading proficiency and speed. Basic sight word knowledge was a major dividing point between at/above level readers and below

grade level readers. Since below level readers did not have basic sight word knowledge in place, reading the most simple primer became a slow, word by word process.

It should be mentioned at this point, all grade levels were presented with basic sight word lists, either Ekwall or Dolch at the beginning of their school year. At each grade level, teachers emphasized the importance of knowing these words to parents and children at conference time both in the first semester as well as the second semester of school. Parental involvement was a variable factor here and not consistent from child to child. However, from talking to teachers at each grade level, it became apparent that the children who were at/above grade level readers practiced basic sight words with their parents at home, whereas the below level students had minimal parental involvement in learning these words.

In further analysis, there were other factors that a "year long" study (rather than this one month study) could have addressed, providing a comparative view of the outcome. These factors were; parental involvement, comparing schools in different locations i.e. inner city versus suburban, parochial versus public school reading programs as well as comparing the outcomes of a school with a whole language reading program versus a school with a phonics based reading program. If the study took place over a year's time, the rate and type of progress made from September to December to May could have been tracked.

The purpose of this study has been to add to already present research information on the effectiveness of an explicit phonics program within a literature based reading program. It was qualitative and exploratory in nature and process. This paper explored the effectiveness of this school's present supplementary explicit phonics program and instruction at each grade level by observing children at each grade and reading level as to how they learned, as well as used the reading process. In addition, an important component to the reading program was teacher philosophy and methodology in reading instruction. Uniformity of teacher philosophy and a continuity of similar instruction in phonics based reading curriculum provided these students with a consistent reading program from kindergarten through second grade. Teacher consistency in instruction was an important contribution to the overall effectiveness of the reading program K-2 which was 75% phonics instruction and 25% whole language instruction. Based upon the common teaching goals and consensus of the three teachers, additional curriculum resources were added and ordered for the following year. Academic and curricular planning was coordinated K-3. Each grade level reviewed and ordered similar additional phonics and grammar texts that will be added to the curriculum as supplementary instruction.

This was a good study for our school. Teacher's philosophy and method of reading instruction has been highly supported by the principal who was pleased to see the interaction and consensus in curriculum planning amongst primary grade levels. The value of this research study was that it revealed the value in continuity of instructional approach and curriculum as well as the

observable reading styles of students and their effect on the reading process.

The results reinforced the need of reading programs to provide students with effective phonics instruction to help with decoding skills and overall comprehension.

Conclusion

"The more exposure the beginning reader has to literature to apply and practice reading and writing skills, the more proficient he/she will become in practice and application."
(Evers 1998)

To flood children with examples of the printed word in the classroom is to provide children with as much of the printed word as possible to help them become familiar with different kinds of text. The learning environment of the classroom is an important component in helping the child to learn to read proficiently. To teach to all children the same reading skills regardless of their reading level shows below grade level readers the possibilities of learning the printed word. It can help to raise a child's reading level because he/she can observe what techniques good readers use to read unfamiliar text. All of the above statements are examples of what each of the three teachers interviewed for this paper believe should be included in a classroom environment to encourage reading. Exposure to print, direct application of learned skills, and systematic practice of reading and writing contribute to the effectiveness of a reading program. We have observed what good readers do when they read. A reader's goal is to build meaning out of what he/she is reading.

By assessing each of these twelve students kindergarten through second grade, we were able to observe what good readers did; they had a high level of phoneme awareness. They employed phonics decoding skills that built upon phoneme awareness skills. They created a set of reading subskills and used context clues to self-correct in order to make sense of the text. The "at grade" level and "above grade" level readers had these learned skills in place when reading familiar and unfamiliar text. They were using the reading process which has three major cueing systems; a background (semantic) knowledge that adds meaning to the text, the knowledge of grammatical structure (syntactic) and most importantly they had learned, understood and used the letter/sound relationship in decoding unfamiliar words (graphaphonic). Proficient readers, as we have been observing throughout this paper had their graphaphonic cueing system in place.

Proficient readers learned to use explicitly taught phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words. Proficient readers also used contextual clues within the text to help with decoding an unfamiliar word. Although the literature based reading program provided analytic phonics instruction within the text presentation, it was the instruction of supplementary explicit phonics that provided the children with the skills to decode unfamiliar text. The children used these phonetic decoding skills in conjunction with contextual clues to check for meaning when reading a sentence within the text.

Reid Lyon has stated in his address to the Senate "one hesitates to pin a one size fits all solution to the reading process and exclusively use code-based

versus literature-based instruction in the classroom." (Lyon 1998) Indeed, reading development is complex and it is our duty as educators to provide a range of methods in reading instruction within the classroom to fit the needs of all students regardless of learning style and research or administrative debate. To accomplish the goal of teaching reading to all children, we need to provide direct systematic explicit instruction of phonics and language as a basic skill instruction within a multiple level instructional approach. Explicit phonics instruction is just one component of the reading process. Use direct, systematic explicit phonics instruction as a primary component of a reading program. Provide a base of phoneme awareness or letter/sound instruction that will easily transfer into the use of phonics as a decoding skill. The issue is not whether we use phonics or whole language in reading instruction. Rather, the issue is how we use phonics; as a primary component of a reading program, as well as when we use phonics; at the beginning reading level. In addition, we need to ask ourselves what other resources and methods can we teach children to use in addition to phonics in order to meet their diverse learning styles and needs in learning to read. Keeping in mind that children are diverse learners, once they have mastered the skill of decoding words, we need to be mindful that our goal as reading teachers is to produce children and adults who love to read. To fulfill this goal, we should provide them with as many opportunities to learn to read as only a multiple method reading program can offer.

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Statistics for 1998-99 School Year

Racial / Ethnic backgrounds

African American	59%
Filipino	16%
Mixed racial	9%
Hispanic	7%
White	4%

Economic Status

Financial Aid	
Free or Reduced Lunch	40%
Single Parent Homes	45%

Religious Background

Catholic	42%
Non-Catholic	57%

Commute From outside the City

East Bay	20%
South SF or Peninsula	13%

Total Number of Children: 269

Class Numbers

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Oldest or Only</u>
K	28	18
1	28	19
2	30	16
3	32	22
4	30	26
5	27	18
6	33	30
7	32	29
8	27	27

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe your philosophy on teaching reading.
2. Do you include other components in the reading program? Clues, literature, prediction - the reading process?
3. Is your reading program a phonics based program? Which program is it? Please describe the program, its' goals and methodology.
4. When teaching your phonics program, do you use it in conjunction with a text or in isolated presentation or both? Please describe.
5. How do you measure student knowledge or outcome/effectiveness of phonics/reading program? Please give examples of assessment methods used - verbal as well as written.
6. How effective do you feel your phonics/reading program is in providing student outcome of grade level or above reading competence?
7. How do you compensate for different entry level reading skills?
8. What do you see as your responsibility to compensate for those differences?

- 1 Please describe your philosophy on teaching reading.

In learning anything, the more you do, the better you get at it. I flood them with reading material. I read to them daily. Their parents read to them a minimum of fifteen minutes a night and sign a daily log to be turned in at the end of the week. The environment of the classroom is filled with examples of the printed word; books at many different levels, newspapers and series books. I try to develop a sense of language and meaning through the use of contextual clues from the books. I would say my reading program consists of twenty-five percent whole language type instruction and seventy-five percent phonic instruction, working on letter/sounds within words.

The reading program Signatures is a literature based series based on thematic content. I first read to the whole class and the children listen. I read again aloud to the whole class, but this time I do a shared reading exercise using prediction and text clues. The third time we read together, silently following a taped version of the story. Following this exercise, the teacher reads a sentence and then the child reads the same sentence - the child reads with the teacher for the final phase of oral reading exercise.

- 2 Do you include other components in the reading program? Clues, literature, prediction - the reading process?

The components I use to supplement my reading program are prediction and use of context includes to aid in story comprehension. In using prediction the children learn to look at the whole text-printed word and pictures. They answer the question, what do you think about this? They look at the pictures like they are a story without words to create meaning. When we are reading together we use clues based on the pictures to figure out what the word is and what it means.

- 3 Is your reading program a phonics based program? Which program is it? Please describe the program, its' goals and methodology.

Our reading program is a literature based whole language program called Signatures by Harcourt Brace. The program is supplemented with heavy phonics and language skill instruction. I use three phonics workbooks. The Phonics Activity Workbook is supplemental to Signatures and is also published by Harcourt Brace. We also use AstroPhonics which is heavily skill oriented and Phonics Workbook by Modern Curriculum Press.

The goal of my phonics program is to have the students learn consonant and vowel letter sounds, as well as diagraphs ch, sh, th, and wh.

4. When teaching your phonics program, do you use it in conjunction with a text or in isolated presentation of both? Please describe.

I use my phonics program both in isolated and contextual presentation. As I mentioned before, I use the Signatures workbook to go with the reading text, however, I use many supplemental phonics exercises and workbooks in additional isolated presentations. The children learn their ABC and learn corresponding words memorizing five sight words a week. I use sight words from Ekwall's Basic Sight Word List.

5. How do you measure student knowledge or outcome/effectiveness of phonics/reading program? Please give examples of assessment methods used - verbal as well as written.

I measure student knowledge through individual assessments with each child by testing beginning sounds of words, as well as individual reading assessments based on sounding out words. Reading assessment is also done through the "home structured" reading program, one on one teacher/student interviews and anecdotal assessment as it happens in the classroom. Portfolio assessment of phonics work and reading is done once a month.

6. How effective do you feel your phonics/reading program is in providing student outcome of grade level or above reading competence?

I feel my phonics program is effective in producing at level or above readers, but I am always trying to add to the work. The more I add the more effective it (the reading program) becomes. Last year's Kindergarten class was reading at level. This year with work additions, I hope seventy percent will read above kindergarten level. What determines the level of the reader is parent involvement, newsletters home and positive rewards for reading achievement.

7. How do you compensate for different entry level reading skills?

All phonics work is done by the whole class daily. Anything not finished goes home to be completed and sent in the next day so that everyone has done the work and remains on task. I do not group children into flexible reading groups. I believe all levels benefit from interaction with each other. There is an entry level test to kindergarten and that is effective because it includes social interaction and all academic components such as color, numbers, letters, following directions and recognizing pictures.

8. What do you see as your responsibility to compensate for those difference?

I feel I have a huge responsibility to the children. That is why I demand parent involvement - parents are the primary educators in partnership with me. If you have them working with you, you can go so much further and do so much more for the child. At our school, you need to push even more - so I teach to the highest level I can. OF the children coming in this past year, I have fourteen readers out of twenty eight children versus six readers out of twenty eight last year. Whether I use flexible reading groups depends on the different levels of the children year to year, sometimes it is simply not possible given the group of children you have to work within different level, not only reading level but social/maturity level.

1. Please describe your philosophy on teaching reading.

The learning environment of the classroom is a very important component to any reading program. I believe in exposing the children to as much of the printed word as is possible in different text forms, as well as examples of print set up visually in the classroom. I provide different areas in the classroom for reading and writing activities, the reading center (classroom library), the writing center - for children to write letters or practice sentences and a science center. The reading program, literature and phonics is conducted with whole class participation regardless of ability level. Opportunities for individual tutoring and small reading groups is provided. Reading is taught in a direct, systematic manner. Children become familiar with how to use phoneme awareness and on using phonics skills to decode or sound out a word. I use phonograms or word families to show children the similarities in sound and how to create new words out of the word family with both short and long vowels sounds. I use the overhead, chalkboard and sound/word worksheets as well as workbooks for teaching phonics explicitly to the whole class. Everyday we have a literature activity (oral reading, read aloud, individual or shared reading) explicit phonics instruction and writing exercise. Whenever the children finish their work early, they are to take out their readers or a supplementary reader (given to them to match their reading level) and silently read to themselves.

2. Do you include other components in the reading program? Clues, literature, prediction - the reading process?

The reading program kindergarten through third grade is the Signatures Series by Harcourt Brace Publishers. It is a literature based program divided into themes integrating language arts, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, phonics and writing. For the literature component of the program, I do shared reading of the text with the whole class and introduce/use predicting skills that refer to the text pictures. Vocab words are written down in their vocabulary book. I gave each of them a "Spelling Dictionary" so that they could look up a word when they were writing. Signatures does not provide systematic explicit phonics instruction, so I supplement the text and workbook with isolated explicit phonics instruction from our Phonics Workbook and build on those lessons using McCracken Spelling Through Phonics.

3. Is your reading program a phonics based program? Which program is it? Please describe the program, its' goals and methodology.

The Signature Collection by Harcourt Brace is not phonics based. It is a multi-ethnic literature based series that includes phonics in context. Its goal is to provide good literature within a balanced instructional program. Signatures provides opportunity to present material either whole/small group and shared/guided reading. It emphasizes writing skills and integrates other areas of the first grade curriculum such as science, math and social studies.

4. When teaching your phonics program, do you use it in conjunction with a text or in isolated presentation or both? Please describe.

When teaching phonics, as a base I use a workbook called Phonics by Modern Curriculum Press. To introduce the phonics lessons, I use an isolated presentation of the letters, and then isolated sounds within words. I supplement this exercise with exercises from McRacken Spelling Through Phonics that emphasize isolated letter sounds in words and provide exercises that stress identifying beginning, ending and medial sounds within words. To integrate the phonics lessons to the Signatures text, I preview some word families we have learned and ask the children "what word families can we see in our story, what words have blends, short vowels, long vowels etc." it's a team game we play and they come up with many words. Phonics is always taught whole class-words are broken up by letter sound and "sounded out".

5. How do you measure student knowledge or outcome/effectiveness of phonics/reading program? Please give examples of assessment methods used -verbal as well as written.

Each day during the literature segment of our reading program, we have oral reading. This exercise is whole class and children volunteer to read aloud to the class. At the time, I keep track of their oral reading on a roster sheet and anyone having difficulty reading and applying phonics skill is noted. Several times during the week, during "free reading" time, we have small group reading. It is at this time I either sit with the group or sit with an individual child to track their reading process and progress. I use Ekwall's Reading Diagnosis Chart to track reading progress and skill, September, December, and in May. Out of twenty eight students, I have ten above level readers, eleven at grade level readers, two at primer or below level and five at pre-primer or very low. Each of the five below level readers have very low phonemic awareness skill - and all are in a Title One tutoring program as well as additional tutoring in reading skill from volunteer tutors.

6. How effective do you feel your phonics/reading program is in providing student outcome of grade level or above reading competence?

I gave my children a graded word list test the second semester. I was happy to see that some of the at grade level students rose to above grade level reading. Second semester, I saw many of my struggling students start to use phonics to "sound" their words out. They are recognizing more word families and recognizing parts of words or sounds within words that help them break up or decode an unfamiliar word. I truly believe that this reading progress in the children who were below level readers is due to a straightforward, explicit instruction and repetition of phonics that stresses letter/sounds in isolation as well as within a word. The systematic, direct instruction of phonics daily allowed the child to focus on the letter/sound within a word and helped with word comprehension and self-correcting skills while reading unfamiliar text. Repetitiveness, reading the word, saying the word, writing the word and saying the word again heightens a child's word attack skill. We also clap out syllables in a word. Clapping to the numbers of syllables in a word helps the child focus on the groups of letter sounds making up the word. Whenever children are finished with their work, the class rule is to take out their reading book and to silently read until the next lesson begins.

7. How do you compensate for different entry level reading skills?

In the beginning of the year, I tested each child for their level of phoneme awareness, alphabet letter/sound identification and phonics decoding skills in reading. Based upon the results of these tests/observations, I arranged class reading folders into different reading levels, high, at level, and below level and gave out supplementary reading materials or readers to each child based on those levels. These materials are used every day for a period of sustained silent reading. The children also use these materials when they finish their classwork early. They know they are to silently read until the next whole class lesson. These folders are updated to match the children's reading progress. However, I teach all the children-whole class instruction in phonics, spelling, grammar and every child follows the grade level readers as part of the Signatures reading curriculum - regardless of reading level or skill/ability. We have cross-age tutors, Monday (fifth grade) and Wednesday (fourth grade). These tutors work with their first grade partner on oral reading skill, comprehension, and memorizing the basic word list. I assign reading twenty minutes each evening to each child. For the children at the lower level, I have suggested tutoring offered here at school each Wednesday at 7:15 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. I have two class helpers, volunteers. One works with the lower level readers individually and the other volunteer, also a retired teacher, takes the above level readers to work with them in extra reading and comprehension exercises. I send extra reading material home with the lower level readers to do with the parents.

8. What do you see as your responsibility to compensate for those differences?

My responsibility is to teach each child regardless of reading level the same skills and information...to help each child become the best he/she can be - to be a person who loves to read and is a good reader. I believe the more any beginning reader, regardless of ability/level is exposed to repetitive, direct instruction of phonics and language skills, the more he/she will learn by modeling the behavior of other good readers. I try to teach to the higher level and model for the children what a good reader does. Daily instruction to all children of a balanced reading program - one whose base is phonics, but one that introduces good literature as well as additional reading instruction methodologies compensates a variety of abilities and levels in the classroom. I am aware of the different learning style sand needs of my students and it is my responsibility to provide them with as much tutoring, assistance and praise in progress as possible.

Results

Teacher Interview - Second Grade

Please describe your philosophy of teaching reading

1. The learning environment is important to me. I like to see children paying attention, and feeling good about learning.

I like to teach in a simple, concise direct way. I like as much learning as possible to take place in a short amount of time with few basic resources. I use the board, some flash cards, finger printing, study sheets, worksheets and books.

2. Do you include other components in the reading program?

In include phonics. We have a phonics workbook. I have supplementary readers that I use. I use picture books that I read to the children every day. I also use these books for visualization. I have the children close their eyes and picture what I am reading. I then have them draw me a picture of what they saw. I also have the children look at pictures in supplementary readers as well as the basic reader, and make predictions by looking at the pictures of what is happening in the story.

Along with all of this, I stress the Main Characters and what they are doing in the story. I ask for the problem presented in the story, and for the solution. There are times when we talk about the beginning, middle and end of the story. We write a few sentences, and then draw a picture of each part. I often talk about the place where the story is taking place and have the children illustrate this.

Around the second semester I begin to work on finding the main idea of a story. We talk about it. Write it up, and illustrate it.

3. Is your reading program a phonics based program?

Signature Harcourt and Brace

Our reading program is a multi- ethnic literature based program that is divided into themes. Additional books as resources on the same theme are mentioned in the Teachers Edition books are offered that give further opportunities to work on the given theme.

The program integrates Language Arts, Grammar, Spelling, Voc. phonics, and writing are all part of the program. There is a Theme Resource

section at the back of the Teacher's Guide that gives additional group work, and writing ideas as well as a daily language review.

This program also brings in art, social studies and science and math. Ideas of how to integrate these subjects are given in the Teacher's Guide as well as in the Theme Resource section.

Its goal seems to be to present a well rounded integration of literature and subjects to the children by the way the themes are set up in the book. It seems to want to familiarize the children with as much literature as possible, and with the opportunity to work in small groups, reading together and writing together.

Methodology - The program offers multi-cultural literature, fiction and nonfiction, and cross curricular literature. It offers phonics, grammar and writing in order to give the children the tools to become better readers. It gives ideas for group work.

4. When teaching your phonics program, do you use it in conjunction with a text or in isolated presentation or both?

We have a phonics workbook called Phonics. It is published by Modern Curriculum Press.

I use my phonics program in isolated presentations. I do this because I like the way it follows systematically. The phonics in text does not follow in a systematic way. I like to know where I am going, and where I have been. I can better keep track of what I have taught in phonics if I follow a systematic program.

When I present vocabulary words from our Signature Reader, I focus on sounding out the whole word, and will pinpoint certain sounds, and focus on them.

5. How do you measure student knowledge or outcome/effectiveness of phonics/reading program?

Verbal

I measure the effectiveness in various ways. First of all I listen to children who have difficulty with reading to see if they are trying to sound out words that are difficult for them to read. Presently, I have six children who struggle the most with reading. I have observed that they are all making an effort to apply the phonics that they have learned. I find that I need to give them time, and instruction the rest of the students to give them time

to do this. If I rush them, they don't try to use their phonetic skills, but if I allow five to ten seconds waiting time, I find that they will make the effort.

I call on students as groups, and as individuals to give me the sound of a letter or letters that I point to on the board.

I call on students individually to give me the sound for a letter or letters that I call out. Sample: "Give me the sound for the letter sh".

I sometimes say sounds in words, and have the children fingerprint the letters of the sounds that they hear. I ask them to tell me which letter or letters were fingerprinted.

I pick out five sounds that I think are reasonable for the children to know, and I ask each child individually to give me the sound for each letter or letter as I point to them. I record any missed "sounds" on a class sheet. I reteach the sounds missed. I focus on the children who missed them and call on them making sure they have learned them.

Written

6. How effective do you feel your phonics/reading program is in providing student outcome of grade level or above reading competence.

In November I gave a graded word list to my students. Fourteen of my students reading level was a third grade to fifth grade. Six of my students read at the second grade level. Three of my students read at the second grade level. Three of my students read at the pre-primer level. Two students read at primer level, and one student at first grade level. Two students who had been reading at primer level, by this date, had jumped to second grade level. I would say that teaching phonics, and making the children use their phonics skills when presenting new words has proven invaluable to my reading program.

I am retesting the children who scored at reading from pre-primer level to first grade level in November on February 22. I will have the results for you. Lets see if the graded word list shows any improvement. I can say that I see a big improvement in these children. I see them reading books and wanting to read books.

7. How do you compensate for different entry level reading skills?

This is always a challenge. I teach all the children the same skills regardless of their reading level. I let all the children follow, and read in the second grade reader regardless of reading skills ability.

The children who read below grade level I put in a Reader geared at the level in which they are reading. I have peer tutors who listen to these children read every day. These tutors also work on a reading word list with these children. I listen to these children read on a regular basis so that I am aware of how they are doing.

In addition to this, I send a weekly reading word list home to be studied with the child's parent. I assign reading for homework every day. From time to time, I send home some reading material to the parents so that they can help their child.

I have two adult helpers who come in once a week and work with individual students.

8. What do you see as your responsibility to compensate for those differences?

I see my responsibility in this way. I need to teach phonics daily. I need to go over short word lists daily. We need to read orally daily. I need to see that the children who struggle with reading are placed in a Reader that is geared to the level at which they are reading.

I see the need to provide daily tutoring, and help for these students. I assign a peer tutor for each child. These tutors are ready to provide help, and assistance during the day as needed.

It is also my responsibility to send home word lists, and reading materials to the parents so that they can work with their child.

I am aware that these children need to be helped and encouraged and praised for words learned, for pages read. I try my best to make them feel good about themselves, and the progress they are making. I use praise heavily with these children.

Reading Diagnosis Chart

67

NAME _____ TEACHER _____

GRADE _____ SCHOOL _____

1	Lacks Knowledge of the Alphabet	Pre-Reading
2	Word-by-Word Reading	
3	Incorrect Phrasing	
4	Poor Pronunciation	
5	Omissions	
6	Repetitions	
7	Inversions or Reversals	
8	Insertions	
9	Substitutions	
10	Guesses at Words	
11	Voicing-Lip Movements, Finger-Pointing, and Head Movements	
12	Basic Sight Words Not Known	
13	General Sight Vocabulary Not up to Grade Level	
14	Phonics Difficulties: Consonants ^{Begin, middle, end}	
15	Phonics Difficulties: Vowels ^{begin, middle, end}	
16	Phonics Difficulties: Blends, Digraphs, or Diphthongs ^{sh, ch, wh}	
17	Structural Analysis Difficulties	
18	Contractions Not Known ^{can't, I'm, it's, etc.}	
19	Inadequate Ability to Use Context Clues	Decoding
20	Vocabulary Inadequate	
21	Comprehension Inadequate ^{begin, middle, end}	
22	Low Rate of Speed	
23	Inability to Adjust Reading Rate	
24	High Rate of Reading at the Expense of Accuracy	
25	Inability to Skim or Scan	
26	Unable to Locate Information	
27	Undeveloped Dictionary Skills	Other
28	Written Recall Limited by Spelling Ability	

The items listed above represent the most common difficulties encountered by pupils in the reading program. Following each numbered item are spaces for notation of that specific difficulty. This may be done at intervals of several months. One might use a check to indicate difficulty recognized or the following letters to represent an even more accurate appraisal:

D—Difficulty recognized
P—Pupil progressing
N—No longer has difficulty

CHECK FOR
LETTER RECOGNITION
SOUND RECOGNITION / WORD RECOGNITION

apple

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff

Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll

Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq

Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv

Ww Xx Yy Zz ? , .

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

GRADED WORD LISTS

Pre-Primer

A

the
am
get
is
and
here
see
not
can
will

Primer

C

today
does
three
from
under
began
name
there
could
again

Pre-Primer

B

come
you
went
him
two
then
know
around
pet
house

First

D

biggest
where
yourself
those
before
things
stopped
place
always
everyone

GRADED WORD LISTS

Second

E

morning
since
together
begin
which
near
should
yesterday
eight
remember

Fourth

G

because
bridge
microscope
curious
estimation
reliable
government
business
direction
avenue

Third

F

important
airport
through
fifteen
information
ocean
preview
laughter
preparation
building

Fifth

H

aircraft
necessary
argument
chemical
representative
terminal
apology
instruction
evidence
consideration

GRADED WORD LISTS

Sixth

I

frustration
explanation
economical
recognition
triumphant
insignificant
peculiar
observation
glossy
astronomer

Seventh

J

psychology
limitation
democracy
environment
barometer
prohibited
relevance
calculate
counselor
endorsement

Eighth

K

geometric
molecule
editorialize
antecedent
physics
metaphorical
iniquity
extenuating
succinct
poignant

Ekwall Basic Sight Word List

- | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. a | 28. make | 55. oh |
| 2. did | 29. said | 56. you |
| 3. have | 30. we | 57. your |
| 4. know | 31. big | 58. about |
| 5. one | 32. get | 59. call |
| 6. to | 33. house | 60. had |
| 7. and | 34. my | 61. mother |
| 8. do | 35. the | 62. see |
| 9. her | 36. what | 63. time |
| 10. like | 37. but | 64. after |
| 11. play | 38. go | 65. came |
| 12. too | 39. I | 66. he |
| 13. are | 40. no | 67. now |
| 14. down | 41. then | 68. she |
| 15. here | 42. where | 69. tree |
| 16. little | 43. can | 70. all |
| 17. put | 44. good | 71. could |
| 18. two | 45. in | 72. help |
| 19. away | 46. not | 73. old |
| 20. eat | 47. this | 74. so |
| 21. him | 48. who | 75. up |
| 22. look | 49. come | 76. am |
| 23. run | 50. has | 77. day |
| 24. water | 51. it | 78. how |
| 25. be | 52. of | 79. on |
| 26. for | 53. three | 80. some |
| 27. his | 54. will | 81. us |

Ekwall Basic Sight Word List

82. an	109. ride	136. ask
83. find	110. them	137. buy
84. is	111. went	138. got
85. other	112. by	139. Mrs.
86. something	113. green	140. please
87. very	114. me	141. tell
88. around	115. sat	142. white
89. fly	116. there	143. at
90. jump	117. when	144. children
91. over	118. saw	145. high
92. stop	119. they	146. more
93. want	120. would	147. party
94. as	121. yes	148. than
95. from	122. again	149. why
96. let	123. boy	150. ate
97. ran	124. fun	151. cold
98. take	125. long	152. happy
99. was	126. or	153. morning
100. back	127. soon	154. pretty
101. funny	128. well	155. thank
102. man	129. any	156. with
103. red	130. brown	157. ball
104. that	131. girl	158. color
105. way	132. Mr.	159. if
106. blue	133. out	160. much
107. give	134. stand	161. pull
108. may	135. were	162. their

Ekwall Basic Sight Word List

163. work	190. fast	217. enough
164. been	191. night	218. hard
165. cry	192. sleep	219. men
166. into	193. under	220. round
167. must	194. father	221. those
168. rabbit	195. walk	222. book
169. these	196. five	223. even
170. yellow	197. four	224. head
171. before	198. always	225. near
172. dog	199. does	226. say
173. just	200. going	227. together
174. name	201. live	228. both
175. read	202. pick	229. every
176. think	203. sure	230. hold
177. began	204. another	231. next
178. door	205. each	232. school
179. laugh	206. grow	233. told
180. never	207. made	234. box
181. shall	208. place	235. eye
182. thought	209. ten	236. home
183. better	210. because	237. once
184. far	211. end	238. should
185. light	212. hand	239. until
186. new	213. many	240. bring
187. side	214. right	241. fall
188. took	215. thing	242. hot
189. black	216. best	243. only



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